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Mercer Island ivy initiative revamped

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Mercer Island Reporter

MERCER ISLAND -- An initiative proposed in April to raise taxes to fight English ivy and other noxious weeds in city parks has been retooled to also include raising funds to acquire open space and build new trails on the Island. The Mercer Island Ivy Removal Initiative Committee first proposed an initiative to raise \$1.75 million a year for 10 years dedicated to ridding Island parks of English ivy.

The plant can strangle and deprive trees of water and nutrients, eventually killing trees. That amount would have raised property taxes on Mercer Island homes by 28 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.

But after talking with a City Council member who offered his help, the group is now asking for less money -- \$1.25 million a year for 10 years -- and will do more than just pull ivy from parks.

The \$1.25 million a year -- which amounts to 20 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value on a Mercer Island home -- will set aside 20 percent (or \$250,000) toward acquiring open space and 10 percent (\$125,000) to building trails in city parks and open space.

``We thought it would ultimately appeal to more voters -- especially with the acquisition of open space -- and to people who like to hike,'' said Virginia Arnon. Arnon and ivy committee members Marguerite Sutherland, Rita Moore and Judy Roan, need to collect at least 2,438 signatures to place the initiative on the November ballot.

``(The initiative) addresses the broader range of parks and open space issues we have on the Island,'' said Dan Grausz, the council member who offered his advice to the initiative writers.